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Tuesday, 14 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 56 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): The Charter of the United Nations has invested the Security Council with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. As the President of France emphasized at the opening meeting of the current General Assembly session, it is desirable for the Security Council's legitimacy that its composition better reflect the state of the world.

That is why France has always favoured an expansion of the Council, which would enhance its representativity. Such an expansion should apply to the permanent member category, because the presence of major countries is necessary. France particularly supports the aspirations of Germany and Japan. Also included among permanent members should be major countries of Asia and the Americas, such as India and Brazil, and, of course, of Africa. The Council's representativity should also be improved in the non-permanent member category, particularly to permit increased representation of developing countries.

The Assembly made those observations last year during the same debate. Today, the discussions are unfortunately at an impasse despite 10 years of debate. Therefore, we should give them new impetus, bearing in mind the general interest. We should also accompany any eventual reform of the Security Council's composition with a strengthening of its authority and effectiveness in the mission entrusted to it.

The Secretary-General has just made proposals to re-launch the needed reform of the Organization. France fully approves of his decision to convene a high-level panel of eminent personalities charged with recommending paths of action. But the Members of the United Nations must commit themselves to reform that extends beyond the Security Council. France, for its part, is prepared to play a full role in such discussions, which should be pursued without delay to enable the Security Council to continue its activities with effectiveness and determination.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the GUUAM Member States — the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

At the outset, I should like to thank the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, and the members of the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council for their important efforts to intensify the overall process of Council

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reform during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Let me also reaffirm our readiness to support constructive initiatives of the current presidency to contribute to that responsible task. The intention to elaborate recommendations for Council reform recently indicated by Assembly President Julian Hunte is a welcome step, and we hope it will bring tangible results.

The general debate, held in this Hall two weeks ago, highlighted the issue of Security Council reform as one of the priority tasks on the international agenda. In fact, there is a strong recognition of both the necessity and the urgency of making that body stronger and more effective in responding to challenges facing the world community in the field of peace and security.

Transforming the composition and the geographical representation of the Council is one of the most important prerequisites for further improving the Council's activities. Despite understandable frustration at the slow general progress in that area, we continue to rely on the common will to reach a reasonable compromise in order to achieve comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects. We hope that the high-level panel of eminent personalities that the Secretary-General intends to establish during the current General Assembly session will help us to view afresh the core of our prolonged deliberations and will pave the way to an appropriate solution.

With regard to the substance of Security Council reform, we hold the position that both categories of membership — permanent and non-permanent — should be expanded. However, equitable geographical distribution of non-permanent seats on the Security Council is a principle to which we attach special significance. Any comprehensive reform proposal must take into account the interests of every regional group. With respect to the idea of creating new permanent seats on the Council, we continue to maintain that countries which are able and willing to take greater responsibility — including financial — for maintaining international peace and security and which enjoy the necessary international authority and support at both the regional and global levels may receive permanent member status.

It is in all our interests that the Security Council be strong, proactive and powerful. Its effective performance in the international arena depends on our readiness to continue and enhance processes aimed at improving its working methods. From our point of view, a general look at the Council's current modus operandi makes it clear that, despite objective and subjective difficulties, that organ has made considerable progress towards greater effectiveness and transparency.

The GUUAM member States stand ready to contribute further to efforts aimed at strengthening and improving the activities of the Security Council.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): We can all agree that the current composition of the Security Council no longer reflects the underlying international geopolitical realities of the present day. There has been general agreement among Member States on the need to expand the Security Council in order to more adequately reflect those current realities in its composition. However, the question of how to expand the Council has plagued the United Nations for nearly a decade now. No conclusions have been reached on that issue, owing primarily to a divergence of views on how to characterize the structural changes that have taken place in the international geopolitical landscape since the Council's inception.

Some Member States may contend that the most significant shift over the past 50 years has been the emergence of a few global and regional Powers whose resources and influence can compete with — or in some cases even exceed — those of certain current permanent members of the Council. However, the Republic of Korea shares the view that an equally salient structural change has been the increase in the number of medium-sized Powers, which possess the willingness and the capabilities to make a substantive contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. Some of those countries could contribute resources — resources comparable to or greater than some of the "aspirants" — to the Security Council in the discharge of its responsibilities. The Republic of Korea believes that marginalizing and alienating those middle Powers by increasing the permanent membership could weaken the institutional vitality of our Organization. Nor would it be consistent with our collective vision of a more just and equitable world. Such an increase would be certain to create serious problems in the Council's operations. From an operational perspective, the increase in permanent members with divergent views could hinder the Council in the discharge of its responsibilities in a timely and efficient manner.

We all know from experience that there are inherent limitations on Security Council action in

situations that threaten international peace and security when a clash of strategic interests occurs among the permanent members. A Security Council with an expanded permanent membership with veto power would be even more likely to become paralysed by conflicting interests. If the Council became increasingly unable to act in grave and dire situations, while giving way to unilateral initiatives or actions led by coalitions of the willing, it would progressively fall into a condition of benign irrelevance in the world order. Such a development would run counter to our ultimate goal of reform, which is to enhance the relevance of the Security Council and strengthen United-Nations-centred multilateralism.

The Republic of Korea believes that under these circumstances the most practical and equitable solution to Security Council reform is an increase in the Council's non-permanent membership. We would like to see a geographical perspective factored into such an increase. Moreover, we believe that more opportunities to serve on the Council should be provided to those countries that are better capable of contributing to the activities of the United Nations. Such an increase in non-permanent Security Council members would benefit the largest number of Member States while causing the least amount of harm to the smallest number of Member States. We firmly believe that this formula for reform would serve both to make the Council more representative and democratic and to enhance the Council's operational efficiency.

The Republic of Korea supports the Secretary-General's idea of establishing a high-level panel of eminent personalities. The Organization will certainly benefit from the informed and intellectual outside input that the panel will offer. However, we note that when it comes to the longstanding issue of Security Council reform, it is not for want of wisdom or intellectual input that our current impasse persists.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea would like to see every effort made to reform the Security Council in a way that not only ensures the equity, justice and effective operation of the Council, but guarantees its primary and central role in maintaining global peace and security.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan, President of the General Assembly during its fifty-seventh session, for having so skilfully over the previous year guided the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. I would like also to commend the representatives of Iceland and Thailand for their efforts towards comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

Ten years have passed since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group. Since 1993, we have all been looking forward to a positive outcome of the process, set in motion by General Assembly resolution 48/26, to reform the Security Council so that it equitably represents all regional groups in its permanent and non-permanent membership and ensures that democracy and transparency are firmly rooted in its decision-making process and in its working methods.

Taking stock of the results achieved over the past 10 years, it can be seen that all Member States have had an opportunity to express their views and put forward their own proposals for reform. In that context, resolution 53/30 represented a major step forward in deciding that a two thirds majority of the membership would be required for adopting any decision on reform. It has also become very clear that a consensus exists across the board with regard to restructuring the Council so as to bring it into line with geographical realities and the changes that have occurred since 1945, in particular the large number of States that have joined the United Nations and on whose behalf the Security Council works.

The report of the Open-ended Working Group on reform of the Council contained in document A/57/47 includes a series of relevant proposals aimed at improving the working methods of the Council. For its part, the Council has begun to incorporate some of those changes into its working methods, particularly with regard to troop-contributing countries for peacekeeping operations, the number of public meetings and the strengthening of contacts with regional organizations. I believe that those are steps in the right direction.

We believe that the Council is on the verge of implementing a series of positive decisions. Its relationship with the General Assembly, however, cannot be limited to the submission of just one report a year. The Council must submit a series of special reports, as Article 24 of the Charter stipulates, so as to allow for closer cooperation between the two organs in

dealing with issues involving international peace and security. The Council must also strengthen its ties with the International Court of Justice. And, on the subject of judicial issues, it is also of the utmost importance that the Council implement changes in its own rules of procedure to allow for public meetings to be held before the decision-making process begins. The current process is not yet sufficiently transparent. We know that the major decisions in the Council are made by one group — or even by a single country.

The increase in the number of Council members is an important aspect of its reform. Annex IV of the report of the Working Group contains a series of proposals put forward unilaterally by countries within the Group or by representatives of groups of countries.

Our position is that absolute equality in sovereignty among Member States is imperative in this process. We would prefer that any expansion be limited to the non-permanent-member category. We do not need any more permanent members to continue discriminating against other Member States. We, of course, will not obstruct any decision to add permanent seats as long as it is done in a non-selective manner and not based on criteria that give priority to countries that can carry the burden of the financing of peacekeeping operations or that are capable of providing a great number of peacekeeping troops or a great deal of equipment. Were we to adopt that principle only, we would simply be reinforcing the hegemony of the strong and the wealthy in the Council, always to the detriment of the poor and weaker States, which constitute the majority. Any expansion of the permanent category must therefore reflect equitable geographical distribution and in particular the status of developing countries. Latin America is not represented, and Africa does not have a permanent seat either, though it represents almost one third of the membership. This must be remedied.

We must also work to realize the aspirations of our continent as represented by the African Union, as embodied in the Harare Declaration and as set out by President Chissano in his statement on the issue. Africa must therefore have two permanent seats on the Security Council, to be occupied by rotation among agreed criteria by African States.

Negotiations in the Working Group have shown that some seek to stress the retention of privileges as they are held today by permanent members, in particular in terms of the right to veto. There can be no question that this is one of the most crucial issues and that it needs to be resolved. The veto right flies in the face of the principle of equal sovereignty among States as stipulated in the Charter and contravenes the principles of justice and democracy.

Many countries, including my own, have spoken out to say that the right to veto does not serve the interests of international peace and security but, rather, the national interests of just a few countries, in particular those that constantly flout the Security Council's authority and refuse to implement its decisions, defying the entire world.

The fact is that the countries that were the victors of the Second World War have arrogated to themselves those privileges. More than five decades have gone by since then, and the world has experienced profound transformations. The membership of the United Nations now stands at 191. Two thirds of these countries were not Members 50-odd years ago and never had any of the privileges of the five permanent members.

We therefore must stress a position we have steadfastly maintained for some 30 years now — that we must do away with the veto right. This could first be achieved by using a restrictive approach and setting out a series of conditions, including the need for at least two votes against by permanent members when a decision is reached by the majority.

Another proposal will involve the use of the veto right in ratifying a decision by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly. These and other such decisions could lead us to doing away with the veto right outright. We believe that Security Council reform must do away with the privileges now given to just a few countries, which allow them to hold hegemonistic sway over the entire world.

The Secretary-General has spoken out on these issues, saying that if we want Security Council decisions to be respected the world over especially by the developing countries, we must tackle the issue of reforming the Council with greater professionalism. We would add that one of the main documents — the Millennium Declaration — calls for intensified efforts to be made to bring about Council reform in all respects. We must now try to give concrete form to the call made by the Secretary-General and act on the commitments we entered into three years ago.

We believe that in future meetings of the Working Group there must be sufficient political will on all sides to bring these reform efforts to a successful conclusion, so that, as a result, the Council can fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter, work in the service of all nations and be more transparent and more democratic in its decision-making process.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, I should like to express my thanks and appreciation to the President for his sincere efforts to direct the deliberations of this session, which is dedicated to one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly.

My delegation has read carefully the most recent report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other Matters Related to the Security Council. We note that, 10 years after its creation, and despite the consensus reached by all Member States and the multiplicity of suggestions offered by States on this matter, the Group has not been able to reach agreement on how to effect the required changes relating to the composition and methods of work of the Council, especially as concerns the increase in the number of its members and the use of the veto. We hope that the influential countries in particular will have the political will to reach a consensus on this issue in the near future.

We have expressed our position on this item regarding the importance of restructuring the Security Council and the methods of its reform. Today we reiterate our position, which can be summarized as follows.

First, the principle of increasing the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council on the basis of a ratio that strengthens its efficiency and its decision-making capacity must be supported. Such an increase should conform to the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States, as well as to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the universal nature of the Council. It should also take into consideration the imbalance that exists in its geographical representation, ensuring the developing countries a greater chance of representation.

We also call for giving priority to the allocation of permanent seats to those States that have demonstrated their commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security — States which will be elected by other Member States in the General Assembly. We believe also that a permanent seat should be allocated to the Arab Group to be occupied by rotating members agreed upon by the whole Group. We call also for the adoption of constructive suggestions on parameters and controls relating to the right to veto, as a step towards reaching agreed language that will ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities with greater objectivity and impartiality and avoids abusing that right.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned at the continued failure of the Council to carry out its mandate and responsibilities with respect to the tensions in the Middle East, especially in relation to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying State, continues to violate international law and to show contempt for all relevant resolutions of the United Nations concerning the conflict in the area.

The latest of those offences was its violation of Syrian sovereignty on 5 October, in an act of aggression that was deplored by the international community, which considered it a flagrant violation of international legality and of the Charter of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the Security Council took no action against Israel — because of the position taken by certain influential permanent Council members — which implies tacit encouragement to Israel. We hope that Israel will not interpret this as encouragement to encroach on the sovereignty of other States with impunity and that the situation will be redressed so that we can avoid sending a message to other States that such aggression and violations are permitted.

Finally, we hope that our deliberations today will lead to some concrete progress in the work towards the reform of the Security Council and an equitable increase in its membership to strengthen its effectiveness and credibility, as well as its central role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): After 10 years of intensive work in the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, we are here today to discuss not how to reform the Security Council, but how to proceed in our discussion. This could seem ironic but it is just proof of the importance and sensitivity of this issue.

On the one hand, the frustration of those who would like to see some quick concrete results is understandable. On the other, the concern about a

decision taken under pressure and with an inflexible time frame is also understandable. After all, we are in the process of substantially modifying the most important organ of the international community that deals with peace and security — and this is not an easy task.

In my opinion and in the opinion of San Marino, the simultaneous increase in both categories, permanent and non-permanent members, seems still far from the general agreement required for the adoption of such an important decision. An increase in the number of non-permanent members is instead the only element that seems shared by all Member States, but that, unfortunately, remains hostage to the expansion in both categories.

The position of my country on the enlargement is well known. San Marino is in favour of an increase only in the number of non-permanent members. In fact, we are opposed to any reform that may raise inequalities among States. San Marino also considers that a quick fix would represent an approximate solution. It would crystallize an Organization that should, on the contrary, reflect the political, social and economic changes in the world. In addition, an increase in the non-permanent members would be the only possible outcome for the time being.

In the opinion of my country, any enlargement should equitably address all Member States, correcting the current imbalances. The regional groups should continue to play a basic role in the allocation of Security Council seats to their members.

My delegation wishes to welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities with the task, among others, of recommending ways to strengthen the United Nations through the reform of its institutions and processes. This initiative could bring new momentum to our discussion. Nevertheless, it is fundamental for the panel to be composed of eminent experts with a specific knowledge of international organizations and to act within a well-defined mandate. Moreover, San Marino considers it necessary that such experts, in fulfilling their mandate, should take into consideration all consultations carried out in the Working Group and maintain intense interaction with all Member States.

Mr. Gopinathan (India): The Indian delegation welcomes this opportunity to comment on agenda item 56: Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

Many delegations expressed during the general debate, held at the beginning of the fifty-eighth session, a sense of deep regret over the inability of the Security Council to reach satisfactory agreement on the issue of war and peace involving Iraq in the first quarter of this year. Many attributed the inability of the Security Council to arrive at a collective and unified decision on the major issues placed before it to the lack of balanced representation in its current composition.

The Prime Minister of India did touch upon this imbalance when he stated in his address at this session of the Assembly, on 24 September:

> "For the Security Council to represent genuine multilateralism in its decisions and actions, its membership must reflect current world realities. Most United Nations Members today recognize the need for an enlarged and restructured Security Council, with more developing countries as permanent and non-permanent members. The permanent members guard their exclusivity. Some States with weak claims want to ensure that others do not enter the Council as permanent members. This combination of complacency and negativism has to be countered with a strong political will. The recent crises warn us that until the Security Council is reformed and restructured, its decisions cannot reflect truly the collective will of the community of nations." (*A/58/PV.11, p. 14*)

Within the United Nations, there has been ample recognition of the need for the Organization and its architecture to deal with the maintenance of international peace and security to adapt to the needs and realities of the times. The Secretary-General himself underscored this point on more than one occasion. In the report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, presented at the current session of the General Assembly, he said:

> "Increasingly, however, [the] decisions [of the Security Council] lack legitimacy in the eyes of the developing world, which feels that its views and interests are insufficiently represented among the decision-takers. The composition of the Security Council — unchanged in its essentials since 1945 — seems at odds with the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century." (*A/58/323, para. 96*)

Introducing his report on the work of the Organization at the beginning of the general debate, the Secretary-General had said that to regain the confidence

of States, and of world opinion, the Security Council must become "more broadly representative of the international community as a whole as well as the geopolitical realities of the contemporary world" (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*).

India's position on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council has been summed up in the words of Prime Minister Vajpayee quoted at the beginning of my statement. Therefore, I shall not go into details, as they have been spelt out on several occasions in the past. Suffice it to say that we do not subscribe to partial and piecemeal solutions that bring no resolution to the core problem. Nor are we intimidated by relevance of the time factor cited by some as a reason to rush into partial reform. A subject as complex and intricate as Council reform cannot have a time line or a quick fix imposed, even as we agree that Council reform is urgent and pressing, and must be administered in a reasonable time frame.

I would be remiss if I did not register my delegation's sincere appreciation for the lead taken by your predecessor, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, Mr. Jan Kavan, of the Czech Republic, in the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for this year. Acting on a proposal made by some to streamline cluttered and unstructured documents, noteworthy progress was achieved in pruning down the document on cluster II issues.

The questionnaire circulated by the President to Member States in the month of May was a dynamic initiative in that it posed and brought to the fore some very pertinent issues, apart from defining where the mainstream lies. It demonstrated that the majority continues to favour a comprehensive approach to Security Council reform, that there must be simultaneous reform in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, and that cluster I and cluster II issues must be dealt with in tandem.

Broad agreement was also expressed on the issue that the time is now perhaps ripe to begin considering concrete proposals for reform on cluster I issues. Member States have also expressed a willingness to consider a change in the working methods of the Working Group in order to inject some dynamism and achieve a breakthrough or register some progress in the proceedings. We need to be cognizant of those facts as we move forward.

Finally, I should like to say a word on the initiative of the Secretary-General to set up a high-level panel of eminent personalities to study the question of United Nations reform in a broad and comprehensive way, of which Council reform will no doubt comprise an important part. We welcome the initiative and look forward to the Group's report and the Secretary-General's recommendations thereon, expected sometime before the beginning of the fifty-ninth session. We hope that the initiative will impart a fresh outlook and inject new momentum into a process that must now urgently move forward. We shall continue discussions in that spirit in the Open-ended Working Group next year. India is wholly committed to working with other delegations in order to carry this process forward to achieve meaningful and productive outcomes.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council is not shouldering the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" that United Nations Members confer on it, and the Council is no longer "carrying out its duties under this responsibility" or acting on the behalf of Members. Frequently, the Security Council is not acting in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The illegal war in Iraq and the inaction in the Middle East conflict, inter alia, are eloquent and irrefutable examples. The Security Council is also doing violence to the spirit and the provisions of the Charter through an increasingly voracious and intrusive agenda that is usurping the functions of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council.

The Security Council has become an anti-democratic and conspiratorial body that acts on the basis of the opacity and secrecy of informal consultations, which have become the norm, not the exception. The Council is seriously inequitable. In no other organ is the principle of sovereign equality being violated in such a daily, institutional and flagrant way. The non-permanent members are excluded and ignored, despite the fact that they enjoy legitimacy granted by the ballot box, not by wars.

There will not be true United Nations reform without Security Council reform. The rule of international law — particularly of the Charter — will not be restored, nor will there be democracy in the Organization, so long as the Council wields totalitarian powers.

It is true that members of the Council, including permanent members, are also suffering from the dictatorship of the super-Power, established by the

force of arms and money. What can be done if the veto is the principle and the purpose of that order? The veto was a reflection of an international balance that does not even exist now. Today, it expresses only the impotence of disagreement. It has grave consequences and poses high risks for the Powers that hold it under the Charter and that are declared irrelevant when they actually exercise it. Paradoxically, the super-Power uses it most and needs it least. Member States, with a handful of exceptions, agree that the veto must be eliminated.

How can we address the veto to eliminate, modify or regulate it? Let us be realistic: what is essential is not the veto's legal aspect, but the powerful forces that suppress the other permanent members, the non-permanent members and the membership at large. They are the forces that regulate the essential processes of the economy, finances and military supremacy along with precarious and fleeting balances of power. They are the same correlations that are preventing the exercise of the mechanical majority of non-permanent members and preventing the General Assembly — as a result of this era's political, military and financial realities — from regaining the powerful functions outlined in the document we call, with nostalgia and hope, the Charter. Today, the United Nations is a reflection of the world dictatorship from which we are suffering and of the unjust, exclusive and unsustainable order in which we live.

In the meantime, let us continue to work. The Security Council must be expanded to include new permanent and non-permanent members. As stated by the Non-Aligned Movement, if there is no agreement on other categories, the number of non-permanent members must be immediately increased. The new permanent and non-permanent Council seats created as part of an expansion must have exactly the same prerogatives as the current ones. The objective of an expansion must be to correct the inadequate representation of developing countries. Two or three African countries, two or three countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, and two or three of the developing countries in Asia must come in as permanent members with the same prerogatives as the current ones, including the veto. Until we achieve the ultimate objective of eliminating the veto, we will need to limit its application to Chapter VII of the Charter as a first step towards that objective.

Informal Council consultations must proceed from a decision adopted in a formal meeting on the basis of a proposal by one or several Council members that is included in the record. To save time, we will not reiterate many other elements that our delegation has already addressed in this Hall so many times. The General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group must continue its work with renewed vigour.

Can we only hope for a better world? We, the powerful majority of Member States, can impose democracy. This can done only from within the General Assembly, where each State has a vote and none a veto. This is no utopian vision. It would be feasible to create a powerful alliance among all Member States that would include almost all of the permanent members of the Council that aspire to democracy in international relations, sovereign equality, multilateral agreement, international law and a system of collective security — in other words, those that want a United Nations that is perfectible but indispensable, notwithstanding its flaws, mistakes and capitulations. In the absence of a comprehensive political decision, only superficial, cosmetic reforms will be feasible.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): The Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform was established because the States Members of the United Nations recognized the need to address representational equity in the Security Council and to examine formulas to increase its membership. The Working Group was also charged with examining other important matters related to the composition and the working methods of the Council, with the intention of arriving at a package of reforms that would ensure that the Council would effectively execute its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. After a decade of debating Council reform, we find that we are still far from reaching general consensus and that the Security Council is, now more than ever before, in dire need of reform.

Barely a fortnight ago heads of State or Government and senior representatives congregated here for the general debate of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. They recognized the complex challenges that the United Nations faces in the new millennium and the importance of revitalizing our Organization in order to meet these complex global challenges. The call for United Nations reform by 141 world leaders underscores the importance and urgency that Member States attach to this important issue.

The Secretary-General's initiative to appoint a panel of eminent persons received strong support,

because it is now generally accepted that the United Nations cannot continue simply to talk about reform — it must urgently act to make itself relevant to the times and the challenges of our era.

One positive aspect of the Secretary-General's proposal is that the issue of Security Council reform would be dealt with in the context of United Nations-wide integrated reform, including the important element of strengthening the relationships between the organs and institutions of the United Nations.

In the view of the general public, the tardy response to the crisis in Liberia and the failure of diplomacy as regards Iraq and the Middle East was in part attributed to the Security Council and, by extension, to the entire United Nations system. Whatever our views may be of such criticism, we now find ourselves in a situation in which effecting change in the composition and working methods of the Security Council has become an urgent moral and political imperative. Effective and timeous United Nations action in many troubled spots around the globe is essential, because lives depend on it. There can be no greater motivation for us to now bridge our differences and revitalize our common purpose against the scourge of war.

South Africa supports expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of Council membership, with new members having equal sovereign status with existing members in those categories. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the African Union, South Africa has actively participated in the Group. South Africa supports the call by the large majority of Member States for the reform process to be transparent and give due consideration to equitable geographic representation in the context of a package of reforms that would not disadvantage developing countries.

Arguments have been put forward that the size of the Council can be increased only slightly from the current 15, because the Council should not become cumbersome and unable to respond rapidly to crises. Our experience with the Security Council has shown us that its credibility in dealing with crises was not an issue of size, but that credibility emerged when there was a sense of transparency, legitimacy, representativity and accountability in the its deliberations and actions. Similarly, we found that the size of the Council was not the basis for its slow reactions or even its failure to act. More often, it was the use or the threat of use of the veto, as well as a lack of political will on the part of individual powerful States, that often frustrated the will of the majority of Council Members and, indeed, of the majority of United Nations Members.

In this regard, the question of the veto remains a contentious one in the debate on Council reform. When we examine the record of the use of the veto, it becomes clear that we cannot continue to have situations in which individual Member States serve their own narrow national interests while ignoring the overwhelming voice of the international community.

It is, consequently, important that we overcome our traditional divisions on how to reform the Security Council and seek agreement on the composition and the working methods of a Security Council that will serve us all in the context of the new geopolitical realities of this new millennium. The time has come to arrest the erosion of the Council's credibility and to work with the Secretary-General in his bold initiative to reform the United Nations in the interests of all Member States.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express our gratitude to the former Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his determination and commitment throughout the past year's meetings of the Group. His personal efforts, including the informal survey that was conducted, highlighted the near-universal dissatisfaction with the progress of discussions in the Group.

My delegation welcomes Mr. Julian Hunte as the new Chairman of the Working Group and would like to assure him of our support and cooperation throughout upcoming meetings. We believe that he will guide the Working Group through a challenging period during which it will have to take stock of the progress it has made and decide on the best way to consolidate its work into concrete proposals on a reform package. We look forward to working with him and to contributing to meeting that challenge.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Ten years have passed since the General Assembly began deliberations on the issue of Security Council reform, in conformity with the consistent demand of the Member States of the United Nations. However, agreement has not yet been reached. It is no exaggeration to say that repeated deliberations have produced no results at all. That is largely due to the pursuit of unilateral interests, which constitutes a

violation of the basic purpose of the reform. My delegation believes that priority should be attached to the following matters, if the Security Council is to be democratized thoroughly so as to resolve international peace and security issues in line with the common interests and demands of all Member States.

First, the Security Council should be reformed to ensure the full representation of developing countries. As we are all aware, the present composition of the Security Council does not fully represent the demands of today's reality. Only when the representation of developing countries, which make up the overwhelming majority of Member States, is realized will it be possible to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the work of the Security Council and to speed up the democratization of the United Nations.

In that respect, we consider it important to increase the number of non-permanent members first, so that developing countries are fully represented. In addition, under the circumstances in which even elementary issues are not agreed upon with regard to Security Council reform, it is necessary to take a serious approach vis-à-vis expansion in the category of permanent membership.

Secondly, the Security Council should adhere to the principles of justice and impartiality in its activities, on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Due to the unilateralism and high-handedness of the super-Power, the Security Council was unable to properly carry out the missions entrusted to it by the Charter with regard to resolving major international issues. That has undermined the authority and dignity of the Security Council as an organ authorized to ensure peace and security. If the Security Council is incapable of observing the principles of justice and fairness, which are its lifeblood, the value of its existence should be publicly questioned.

The Security Council should fundamentally improve its working methods and fully represent the will and interests of all Member States, thereby restoring the credibility of the international community.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank Ambassador John Negroponte, President of the Security Council for this month, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council (A/58/2), submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation, which did not participate in yesterday's debate on that item, would have preferred to discuss the items pertaining to the Council's report and to representation in the Council together, given the increasingly obvious link between the two items. In that regard, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to make a few brief comments on the report of the Security Council.

The consideration of the Council's report provides a valuable opportunity to examine in depth the work done by the Council as well as to identify the measures that must be taken to make the necessary improvements in the working methods of that important body.

With regard to the report's format, my delegation welcomes the fact that this is a short, analytical document containing a statistical section.

With regard to the functioning of the Council, we are pleased to note that during the period under review the Council held more open meetings, during which an increasing number of States participated. We also note a clear increase in the number of open briefings organized by the Secretariat, which make it possible for States that are not members of the Council to be better informed about certain matters being addressed by the Council.

With regard to the wrap-up sessions held at the end of each month, which are open to non-members of the Council, my delegation believes that that practice is an opportunity to speak on subjects of concern to the international community in an analytical, frank and open manner. We believe that practice should be continued and encouraged.

Having said that, much remains to be done to make the work of the Council even more transparent to all Member States.

Turning to the issue of substance, the report of the Security Council reveals the fact that the Council has not merely reacted to threats to international and regional peace and security; it has also acted directly, resolutely and forcefully to address a great number of conflicts in Africa. However, the Council's efforts have fallen short of our expectation vis-à-vis the Middle East. The Council's inability to become more involved in resolving the Palestinian issue poses a serious threat to the region and to the authority of the Security Council.

Lastly, my delegation supports the President's idea of submitting specific recommendations and

constructive proposals after our debate on this issue in order to improve the capacity of the Security Council.

With regard to agenda item 56, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", allow me first to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Kavan, former president of the General Assembly, and his two Vice-Presidents in the Working Group on Security Council Reform, for their outstanding contribution to the item under discussion today.

The crucial importance of reforming the Security Council has constantly been reiterated from year to year since the establishment, in 1993, of the Working Group entrusted with the consideration of this issue in all aspects. We certainly appreciate the delicate nature and complexity of that task. Nevertheless, we believe that we need to carry out comprehensive reform of the Security Council as soon as possible, and that we must intensify our efforts to that end.

The world is facing new challenges that necessitate our working together within the United Nations, which remains the ideal framework within which to join our efforts to establish international peace and security, as well as the source of international law to which all States without exception should commit themselves.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out in his statement to the General Assembly at the opening of the general debate, those challenges make it necessary for the Security Council

> "to regain the confidence of States and of world public opinion — both by demonstrating its ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues and by becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole as well as the geopolitical realities of today." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*)

While we support the Secretary-General's appeal for a profound reform of our Organization, we reaffirm the fact that Tunisia is willing to take an active part in international efforts to attain that goal, for which there is an increasingly urgent need. The Security Council should be involved in that profound reform. Nevertheless, its enlargement should not necessarily wait until that process is completed.

The wealth of varied proposals that have been submitted give us the potential elements to act towards that end. However, since 1993, after almost 10 years of intense and substantive deliberations, the Open-ended Working Group on that question has not yet managed to develop a specific and universally acceptable formula. The report before us reflects the frustrating deadlock that we have witnessed since the Group was established. The report is still a simple compilation of opposing ideas and proposals that we have been endlessly considering for 10 years now.

This does not mean at all that we do not recognize the progress made in certain aspects of reform of the Council, particularly with respect to its working methods. In fact, the long deliberations of the Group have enabled us to identify a certain number of key elements that have been widely supported by the majority of Member States.

Those elements include, first, the need to reform both the composition and the functioning of the Council to ensure greater representativeness. Secondly, the need to consider the issue of the veto in conjunction with that of the increase in the number of Security Council members. Thirdly, the need to further improve the working methods and decision-making process of the Council to promote the openness, transparency and democratic nature of that organ. Fourthly, the need to consider all aspects of reform of the Council in the framework of a comprehensive package. Lastly, the need for periodic review of this reformed Council.

It is therefore clear that we have the basis for a solution. It is also clear that what is lacking is neither ideas nor proposals but rather the necessary political will to achieve the common goal, set forth in General Assembly resolution 48/26 of 1993 and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, as well as a specific commitment to that end.

Tunisia, which has taken part in all the deliberations of the Working Group since its establishment, continues to stand by its position on that issue, which it has reaffirmed several times. Indeed, my country believes that the goal of that reform is the strengthening of democratic and fair representation on the Council, as well as its credibility and effectiveness. The Security Council must reflect the political and economic realities of our world today. It must have the necessary democratic legitimacy to act on behalf of the international community in carrying out the mandate entrusted to it in accordance with the Charter. Those goals cannot be attained without an increase in both categories of members, permanent and non-permanent.

The size of a restructured Security Council should reflect genuine representation of developing countries and also representation among the industrialized countries that meet the criteria set forth in the Charter.

In that context, Tunisia has always vigorously supported the position of Africa and its demand to be granted two permanent seats, with the privileges inherent to that membership category, and two additional non-permanent seats. Tunisia also supports the rotation scheme approved by the African heads of State and Government. I would also like to recall in that context that my country supports the candidacy of Germany and Japan for permanent seats in the Security Council in light of our belief that those two countries are capable of making a major contribution to the work of the Council and of assuming the responsibilities that fall to permanent members.

With regard to the right of veto, my delegation adheres to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement calling for limitations on the application of the veto to actions undertaken in the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter. Clearly, a positive and constructive attitude on the part of the Security Council permanent members concerning that question will be crucial.

Finally, the issue of periodic review of this reformed Security Council is an essential element of the reform programme that deserves serious consideration. That review should be viewed as a confidence-building measure that will enable us to make the necessary adjustments for the future. Still more important, it will represent the mechanism through which we will be able to assess the contribution made by the new members to the strengthening of the effectiveness of the Council.

We are concerned by the deadlock that seems to be getting worse over time and is prevailing in the Working Group's deliberations. In fact, without genuine political will and a spirit of compromise, the entire reform process will be inconclusive. It is time to adjust international institutions to the reality of the modern world.

We must now strive to establish fresh momentum in our work and begin genuine negotiations on the specific aspects of a viable, fair and especially realistic compromise. My delegation will continue to vigorously support any proposal that will make tangible the ideas of representativeness, transparency and democratization of the Security Council.

We rely, Mr. President, on your energy and wisdom to guide our future work on this issue towards the success that we all seek.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): Last year we had a combined debate on the report of the Security Council and its possible enlargement. In the spirit of our common efforts to revitalize the work of this Assembly I will address both items in one statement, commencing with the membership of the Security Council.

The debate this year, on a practically eternal issue, is much invigorated by the Secretary-General's recent and clear call for radical reform of the United Nations. The world has changed tremendously since the foundation of the United Nations in 1945. We all agree that the United Nations must adapt to changing realities if we want to safeguard its primary role in international peace and security. Mr. Annan put a challenge before us. Sweden welcomes this challenge, and agrees with him that we cannot afford to delay dealing with the core issues.

Global threats must be defined and addressed collectively. Global security requires multilateral solutions. Only the Security Council can provide legitimacy to the use of force beyond the right of self-defence. But this legitimacy is closely linked to how the Security Council is perceived by the entire United Nations membership and the international community as a whole. The Council must therefore be representative of the 191 Member States. Its composition must reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century.

A reform of the Security Council is thus essential for the Council to stay relevant in the eyes of the world. The deadlock on the composition can be broken. We should not let the best become the enemy of the good. Rather than trying to find the optimal solution for decades to come, we should instead accept that any reform may have to be re-thought, in five or ten years' time. A swift agreement on an expansion of the Security Council would demonstrate to the world that this Organization is indeed prepared to adapt and adjust, in order to safeguard and strengthen its legitimacy and efficiency in global politics.

Sweden therefore suggests that the Security Council be enlarged with a number of non-permanent members, especially from developing countries. Sweden believes that an agreement on such an expansion could be reached fairly quickly, if we all adopt a flexible attitude concerning our respective, national positions. Adding non-permanent members now does not exclude the

possibility of agreeing on additional permanent members at a later date.

In his report on the work of the Security Council, the Secretary-General raises the issue of an increased workload for the Council. It is therefore encouraging to note that, in spite of this, the Council has become more transparent towards the entire membership. Sweden welcomes the increase of open meetings in the Council and we hope this practice continues.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the format of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. It is encouraging that, for the second year, the members of the Security Council are using the new and more user-friendly format, with the analytical summary and a substantially decreased number of pages. It is a good example of how to modernize United Nations reporting.

We have momentum for reform, a window of opportunity. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), his speech made at the opening of the current Assembly session and the tremendous support that was demonstrated during the general debate should encourage us all to make change happen. Sweden stands ready to fulfil its responsibilities, and it is determined to be an active partner at this fork in the road; but ultimately it is a matter of our collective effort.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We can not avoid a certain feeling of weariness when, once again, we have to note with regret that the work of the Open-ended Working Group charged with considering all aspects of the reform of the Security Council has hardly made any progress since the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly. And yet, we must be quite clear that we should not resign ourselves to the idea that the reform of the Security Council is no longer necessary, just because the work is now deadlocked. Quite the contrary: each year that passes reinforces our feeling that the Council's current composition no longer reflects today's geopolitical realities. We cannot continue to ignore this fact forever. Ultimately, it is the credibility and the legitimacy of the Council that are at stake. If we do nothing, our inability itself will contribute to eroding the credibility of the Council and of the United Nations in general. I do not think that this is a situation that anyone would want to see come about, since the implications for the maintenance of international peace and security would be quite dramatic.

Therefore, we all need to ask the following question: are our national interests in the long-term better served by the refusal of some to make certain concessions? Of course, we all have national positions to defend, and that is quite legitimate. But perhaps it is time to recognize that it would be in our collective interest to resolutely commit to a constructive search for a compromise.

Therefore my delegation totally supports what the Secretary-General said here in his statement to the General Assembly on 23 September with regard to the need to break the deadlock on this question and with regard to our responsibility for doing so. We congratulate him for having taken the initiative to re-launch, at the highest level of the Organization, the process of reform. We therefore look forward with great interest to the proposals that will be made by the panel of eminent persons. As to the broader context of the reform of the Council, the panel needs to shed new light on our debate, and therefore we hope that this development will give new impetus to implementing the reform and that it will lend new dynamism at the political level.

In fact, it is not so much new ideas that we need; the main elements that are needed for a solution are already on the negotiating table. What is lacking is the political will to take the lead, to take the necessary steps to bring the positions closer together.

The only thing Belgium wants here is to bring about a balanced, realistic reform that would correspond to the wishes of the vast majority of Member States, a reform that would strengthen the representativeness — and therefore the legitimacy — of the Security Council, without jeopardizing its efficiency. With a group of countries that share this approach, my delegation has introduced some pragmatic proposals that seek to expand both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent, as well as to limit the use of the veto. We remain convinced that these are the parameters that are necessary to arrive at a solution of compromise. I can assure you that my delegation will continue to actively participate in the work of the Working Group in the same constructive spirit that inspired our proposals. You can count on our full support in this endeavour.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me to express my thanks to Mr. Kavan, Chairman of the Open-Ended Working Group of the last General Assembly session, and the two Vice-

Chairmen, Ambassador Ingolfsson and Ambassador Kasemsarn for their hard work to ensure the smooth progress of the Open-ended Working Group. We believe that under the leadership of Mr. Hunte, the new Chairman, the Open-ended Working Group will continue to hold constructive discussions.

The past year has been an extraordinary one for the Security Council. On the one hand, positive progress has been made in the efforts to help seek solutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, thus contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability of the countries and regions concerned. This has been widely acclaimed by the international community, especially the African countries. On the other hand, the Security Council has been confronted with unprecedented challenges on the Iraqi issue. Some people have thus felt frustrated about the failure of the Security Council to reach consensus on that issue. Some are worried about whether the Security Council is able to fulfil the responsibility of maintaining peace and security. However, the general debate of the current session shows that the basic consensus of the vast number of Member States remains unchanged. That is, faced with this new situation, the role of the Security Council in maintaining world peace and security should be further enhanced, not weakened. The authority of the Security Council should be reinforced and not reduced.

As was pointed out by Secretary-General Kofi Annan during the General Assembly general debate, it is necessary to reform United Nations organs, including the Security Council, so that they can better respond to the new issues created by the new situation. China shares the view of the Secretary-General. We have consistently supported the efforts to keep pace with the times and conduct appropriate and necessary reform of the Security Council. Reform should be aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Security Council to face new challenges and threats and at realizing more equitable representation.

Security Council reform should start with its unbalanced composition. Currently, representation of the developing countries is insufficient in the Council. Priority should therefore be given to increasing representation of the developing countries according to the principle of equitable geographic distribution.

Discussions on increasing the membership of the Security Council have been going on for ten years at the Open-ended Working Group. In the current circumstances, we should have not only the patience for extensive and in-depth discussions and the urgency to speed up reforms, but also the wisdom to make the appropriate compromises. The Chinese delegation is ready to continue to take an active part in the Open-ended Working Group discussions in a constructive manner. We look forward to creative discussions among all parties during the current General Assembly session in this regard.

We also support the Security Council in the further improvement of its working methods to increase transparency of its work and its efficiency. In recent years, marked progress has been made in improving working methods by holding more open meetings and through good communication and cooperation with troop-contributing countries. This has been well received by many Member States. China is prepared to continue to work with the other members of the Security Council in that regard.

China welcomes the proposal put forward by the Secretary-General on setting up a high-level panel of eminent persons. We believe that the composition of the panel should reflect geographical balance. We also hope to see the panel yield positive proposals that will reflect a consensus to provide the majority of Member States the basis for further discussion and decision.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Yesterday the delegation of Venezuela addressed the Assembly to acknowledge the Security Council's efforts to improve the preparation of its report to the General Assembly, as many previous speakers have highlighted at this very meeting.

Today we intend to focus in the second part of our statement on the issue of equitable representation on the Security Council and of increasing its membership. Unfortunately, we cannot arrive at the same optimistic conclusions on these issues as on others. We note that the efforts made in the Security Council Working Group on equitable representation and on increasing its membership have not produced the results the international community, represented in the Assembly, has been seeking for more than 10 years.

The issue that brings us together today is vitally important to our Organization at a crucially important time to mankind. The Security Council, a principal organ of this system, must regain and consolidate its authority, capabilities and efficiency. Despite the fact

that another year has gone by without progress being made by the Working Group in attaining the proposed objectives, and despite the many efforts made and resources invested, every passing year reveals to us the increasingly pressing need to achieve the consensus necessary among Member States to make the Security Council an equitable and democratic body adapted to this new era.

We believe that Security Council reform must be comprehensive so that the issues of its expansion, the use of the veto and the working methods it should have to be able to adapt itself to current circumstances can be dealt with jointly.

We note with satisfaction the changes in the Council's working methods. This has been observed on many occasions. There has been undeniable progress in terms of holding more meetings and public debates, the holding of briefings that are very useful to non-member States, the more equitable treatment being accorded to non-member States on the speakers' list for public debates and the greater availability of public information on the development and results of the work of the Council. There can be no doubt that that reflects progress.

However, the enthusiasm we feel over these changes gives way to something else when we consider the issues of the veto and of the increase in the Council's membership, progress on both of which remains deadlocked. We note with frustration that the same readiness shown to advance in the areas I mentioned earlier is not evident in the same way with respect to these two other aspects, which are essential.

For a long time, Venezuela has supported elimination of the veto, given its anti-democratic and anachronistic nature. Authentic democratization of the Security Council requires elimination of that privilege or, at the very least, its regulation, in order to restrict its use to what is absolutely necessary. Our hope is that there will be just representation, particularly of developing countries, on the expanded Council. We have taken one more step towards that end by lending our support, in Venezuela, my country, to Brazil's aspirations to be considered for permanent membership on the Security Council. We reaffirm that support today, as we are talking about this institution. We do that every time the issue arises and will continue to do so.

Our country has been participating with great interest in the work of the Working Group in an attempt, to the extent possible, to make effective progress. We have encountered obvious difficulties, but they must not discourage us; rather they should lead us to pool our full efforts and expectations for the initiative introduced by the Secretary-General, when, just a few days ago in the Assembly, he called for the creation of a group of eminent personalities to, among other things, review the functioning of the main organs of the United Nations and to recommend ways of strengthening the Organization. We look forward with great optimism to the outcome of that work and the selection of those personalities, which should be representative of the full context of the United Nations membership.

Our Organization, like any system, will not be able to improve or recover from the ills afflicting it if it does not receive comprehensive treatment that deals appropriately with all organs that are not functioning properly and that are causing dysfunction within the system. That treatment must involve the Security Council, which, as a main organ of our United Nations and as an essential component of achieving substantial change, must also be altered and reformed.

To the extent that we apply the saying that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, we will be ensuring a healthy and sustainable life for our Organization. Toward that end, we strongly appeal to all Member States to continue to strive and to focus our determination to attain that goal.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): Last year we combined the debate on the Security Council report with that on Security Council reform. That was a good approach. It saved time, and the discussion reflected obvious linkages between the issues involved in the two items. We hope that that practice can formally be reinstated in the future, as suggested by a number of previous speakers. I will nevertheless comment today on both items to avoid having taken the floor twice.

Events over the past year have made the need for Security Council reform greater than ever. The Council has had an extraordinary profile around the world. People watched closely as deliberations on Iraq proceeded. There was a very public debate about the effectiveness of the Council in dealing with threats to international peace and security.

Many rightly questioned whether a body designed in the aftermath of the Second World War could be effective some 60 years later. Yet despite such criticisms, the fact remained that there was widespread global support for the Council's role and great

importance attached to its decisions. People want a Security Council playing a lead role in international peace and security; they also want a more representative Council. There is near-universal agreement on the need for the Organization to evolve and to reflect the world in which we now find ourselves. The challenge is how to respond to that need.

New Zealand's views on Security Council reform are well known. We strongly believe that to be credible and effective, the Council must have the full trust and support of the international community. As the pre-eminent global legal body addressing threats to peace and security, the Security Council must be seen as more representative of today's international community.

Trust and respect derive from both the conduct and the composition of the Council; one without the other is not enough. The Working Group has made progress over the past few years on working methods. That should continue. But no matter how effectively the existing Council discharges its duties, if it is not considered sufficiently representative, its authority is diminished.

The Working Group cannot break the impasse on structural Security Council reform. Our hope must now be that the Secretary-General's timely initiative to establish a panel on United Nations reform will bring fresh impetus to Security Council reform. New Zealand fully supports the Secretary-General's holistic approach. The panel should not shy away from difficult, fundamental questions. We look forward to an independent, honest and fresh assessment of where we need to go from here.

We would also appeal to Member States to make the most of the opportunity afforded by the Secretary-General's panel. We very much hope that Member States will be open to this process. While we may have anxieties about the options and the potential implications of those options, we should not step away from exploring the possibilities. In particular, we would stress that reform of the Security Council — or indeed of the whole United Nations — is not a zero-sum game; it is not about winners and losers. We can all be winners. If discussions are premised on the vital need to make the Security Council more effective in the twenty-first century, then everyone will have gained.

Finally, I should like to comment briefly on the Council's report (A/58/2). This year's report again reflects the increasing workload and complexity of issues before the Council. There have been encouraging developments to further enhance Council consultation with Member States in a number of areas, not least peacekeeping, where there have been real efforts to engage with troop-contributing countries. In terms of our own region, New Zealand particularly welcomes the Council's open approach to discussions on Bougainville and Timor-Leste.

However, there have been some areas where the Council has remained worryingly closed to outside consultation. While we recognize that there are times when it is important for consultations to take place behind closed doors to achieve consensus, it is important nonetheless that Member States be kept informed of the issues under consideration. Closed doors can lead all too easily to misunderstanding and misinformation. Lack of communication can undermine the very work the Council is trying to achieve.

The bottom line is that, more than ever before, we look to the Council to recognize that all Member States have an inherent legitimate interest in being kept informed — and sometimes actively engaged — on issues under Council consideration. That principle was wisely recognized in the Charter. It is a logical consequence of the fact that the Security Council's decisions are binding upon Member States in international law. They affect and belong to us all.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): The basic pretext for our debate is well known and simple: the importance and the workload of the Security Council are increasing year after year, in parallel to the complexity of issues in international relations. The Council is in dire need of reform. We all know that it must be reformed, and we have a number of ideas as to how to reform it, but we are unable to reform it. So what shall we do about reform?

After having listened to the statements during the general debate of the fifty-eighth General Assembly session, delivered by the Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Member States — as well as the statements delivered under the item of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/58/1) — we have no doubt that strong support exists for reform of the Security Council. We have not heard a single voice raised against it. In the Millennium Declaration, our Presidents and Prime Ministers unquestionably declared their political will to embrace the process of Council reform. Yet, after more than a decade of negotiations, we have not moved towards any genuine progress in reforming the Security Council.

How can we explain that inconsistency? Providing an honest and comprehensive answer to that question is the first essential step towards reform. Talking about reform will not suffice if we are not ready to identify the bottlenecks and to have an open, straightforward discussion on the matter.

We have taken a number of small positive steps forward in the past year. We highly praise the new format of the report of the Security Council, which represents a notable improvement in the Council's working methods. In its new format, the report is much easier to read and represents a well-organized working document with a greater degree of transparency. It provides us with a comprehensive picture of all the work done by the Security Council in these uncertain times.

And indeed these times are uncertain, as much as they are a challenge to international peace and security. They are underlined by new types of conflicts, like the Iraq war, and by more complex peacekeeping missions, like some of those in Africa. As the Secretary-General has rightly stated, we must be aware of the changes in the international security environment that represent challenges — which today are predominantly global — to peace and security. That is another reason why it is more important than ever before to have an efficient and representative Security Council — one that has the confidence of the entire membership and is supported by world public opinion.

We deeply believe that we cannot achieve our objective through partial reform, tackling only bits and pieces of the problem. We need comprehensive and thorough reform that can be achieved only in a package encompassing all the elements of cluster I and cluster II issues. Provisional or partial solutions will only force us into an endless circle of new rounds of negotiations. Throughout the years, we have demonstrated our ability to debate. It is now time to show that we can produce results, not merely words.

Major decisions on Council reform remain beyond our reach. We place our confidence in the President of the General Assembly — who will chair the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform during this session — in finding new avenues to begin the negotiation process. The importance of the problem is such that no obstacle or disagreement, regardless of its nature or size, can be an excuse for derailing the debate.

It is not only time that is pressing us to find solutions to Security Council reform; it is also an ever-changing political environment and its dynamics that might leave the Organization behind because it is too rigid in its structure or too slow in its reactions. The ability to deal effectively with pressing issues — whether of a political or an organizational nature — is the ultimate sign of the Organization's relevance. If we want the Organization to remain relevant and to maintain its pivotal role in the new era, we must urgently address the problem of Council reform despite all the problems and political sensitivities we may encounter.

Croatia stands ready to participate actively in the forthcoming work and to make its contribution to successful reform.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): First of all, I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Negroponte of the United States of America, President of the Security Council for the month of October 2003, for introducing the report of the Council covering the period from 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003 (A/58/2). As the Security Council is an organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, its report is an important document for consideration by the General Assembly.

My delegation is pleased to observe that the Security Council has taken a number of initiatives in introducing reforms into its working methods. The holding of frequent public meetings and wrap-up sessions and the issuing of press releases containing all statements by the President of the Council on behalf of its members show a growing trend towards transparency. The report did not lose focus in dealing with priority issues such as Iraq, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa. However, there have been comments that an analytical report would serve a more useful purpose than a merely descriptive report.

Thematic discussions allow participation by the larger membership in the Council's work. In my delegation's opinion, such discussions can be fruitful only when they are directly related to the Council's work. Linking extraneous issues that are not directly related to the agenda of the Council can only serve to complicate matters and to detract from its original purpose.

Counter-terrorism remains one of the Security Council's major areas of concern. My delegation attaches importance to the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, established pursuant to resolution 1373

(2001). The fact that an overwhelming number of Member States have submitted reports to the Committee detailing the measures they have taken against terrorism amply demonstrates their resolve and commitment in fighting terrorism. The initiative taken by the Committee to convene a major meeting of some 60 international, regional and subregional organizations on 6 March 2003 will also enhance the effectiveness of global action against terrorism.

Myanmar is cooperating closely with the Counter-Terrorism Committee. It has already submitted to the Committee its second report, along with relevant documents, reflecting the legislative and executive measures that the Government has taken. The third report is being prepared in coordination with the various ministries concerned, and we intend to submit it in due course. Here, my delegation would like to reiterate that Myanmar is opposed to all forms of terrorism.

While some of the procedural changes and initiatives undertaken by the Security Council are to be commended, many of us continue to be concerned over the unrepresentative and undemocratic nature of the composition and decision-making process of the Council. The Millennium Summit endorsed the need to extensively reform the Security Council in all its aspects. Although there are differing opinions, there is at least a consensus view that, at the bare minimum, the Council should be expanded to conform to the present-day realities of the enlarged membership of the United Nations. We welcome the progress achieved so far in the consideration of issues dealing with the working methods of the Security Council, although substantial differences in views remain on other issues.

Myanmar has had several occasions in the past to state its position on reform of the Security Council. Myanmar holds the view — together with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement — that Council expansion and reform should be integral parts of a single package. If the Security Council is to become more representative of contemporary political and economic realities, it should be expanded in both categories.

On the question of the veto — which is one of the key issues of Council reform — an ideal solution in the democratization process should be the abolition of the veto. However, pending such abolition, we should limit its application to the provisions of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. It is also our view that new permanent members of the Security Council should enjoy the same rights and privileges as the current members.

My delegation agrees with the Working Group's recommendations that, based on discussions in preceding years, cluster I and cluster II issues should continue to be considered in a similar and balanced manner.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated that "Reform is not an event; it is a process" (*A/51/950, para. 25*). It has been 10 years since that process started with the establishment of the Working Group in 1993. Once, in 1965, the Security Council was expanded from 11 to 15 members. The United Nations is therefore not a stranger to reform. With a demonstration of realism and political will, we can take the reform process nearer to achieving its goal. In order to build further on the results so far achieved and to further accelerate the process, my delegation fully supports the view that the Working Group should continue its activities at the current session of the General Assembly.

Before concluding, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to Mr. Jan Kavan, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and Chairman of the Working Group; and to Ambassadors Thorsteinn Ingólffson and Chuchai Kasemsarn, who served as Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, for a job well done.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of Ambassador Dube of Botswana, as he has been detained at other meetings this afternoon.

Allow me, at the outset, to align myself with and reiterate my delegation's commitment to the position of the African Group on this important matter.

It is now ten years since the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council began its deliberations. Yet, regrettably, very little progress has been achieved to date. The current report of the Open-ended Working Group, as with previous reports, reflects considerable divergence of views on issues related to the expansion of the membership of the Council, as well as its decision-making, including the use of the veto. We note, however, that there is more agreement on how the Council should conduct its business, that is, its

working methods, and that, in practice, there are now more open debates in which non-members participate.

The present membership of the Security Council is not reflective of the geo-political realities of the twenty-first century, which are significantly different from those of 1945, when the United Nations was founded. The United Nations of today has all world cultures and socio-political systems represented in its membership. The Security Council of today does not in any form reflect this social, cultural and linguistic diversity. Its composition remains predominantly Euro-centred, a fact which, by itself, is a reflection of the lingering influence and dominance of a bygone period of history and which can no longer be acceptable in the twenty-first century.

The challenges before the United Nations are now varied and complex. They require the participation of all Member States if we are to confront them effectively. The responsibility of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, in particular, has greatly increased. The demise of the cold war has not resulted in the peace dividends we all hoped for. Instead, complex and destructive intra- and inter-State conflicts have erupted, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has not been halted.

The authority and integrity of the Security Council is now being tested as never before. It is the responsibility of all Member States to ensure its effectiveness. It would thus defy logic if the membership of the Security Council, especially in the non-permanent category, remained unchanged and the greater number of the United Nations membership did not participate on equal terms in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Various proposals on Security Council reform have been provided by regional groups of the United Nations membership and by individual Member States, in the context of the Open-ended Working Group and other General Assembly debates, and these are worthy of consideration. My delegation aligns itself with the position of the African Union in which the Union seeks the allocation of two permanent and two new non-permanent seats, the utilization of which would be determined by the African Union itself. This and other proposals from other regional groups, particularly from developing countries, are worthy of the consideration by this Assembly.

Frustrating as it may be that, after years of intense debate on this issue, not much progress has been achieved, we should not relent in our efforts to achieve meaningful reform of the Security Council. My delegation attaches great importance to the issue of Council reform because it is central to the success and existence of our Organization. For us, it is important that the membership of the Security Council truly reflect the membership of the United Nations in terms of representation. Bringing developing countries into membership of the Security Council on the basis of the sovereign equality of States would help strengthen their role in the maintenance of peace and security.

The working methods of the Security Council also require further improvement. More public debates should be held with the general membership of the United Nations, so that decisions that the Security Council makes reflect the collective will of the international community. Informal consultations of the Council on various issues should become an exception, and should not substitute for transparency and accountability.

The use of the veto, enjoyed by the five permanent members of the Security Council, requires urgent review. Although there may have been strong arguments by some permanent members of the Council to the effect that it is an effective decision-making tool, in practice it has been used by some to preserve narrow national interests, and this clearly is an untenable situation. The veto should have no place in an appropriately expanded Security Council, and should be replaced with a democratic decision-making procedure based on the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Botswana's commitment to the comprehensive reform of the Security Council to ensure that all States, large or small, can play their rightful role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Botswana will continue to play its part in the Open-ended Working Group. We also welcome the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to appoint a high-level panel of eminent personalities, which will review ways of strengthening the United Nations.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Mr. President, I apologize to you for speaking at great length, yesterday, on the report of the Security Council. I will try to be briefer today, as I speak about the question before us.

There are two reasons why we can be briefer today. One is, of course, that we have spoken on this subject for almost ten years now. We have given all the speeches that we can possibly give on the subject and if any of my colleagues are interested in what our views are, we will be happy to share with them some very thoughtful, long and comprehensive speeches that we have given. The second reason why we can afford to be briefer today is that, when we come to discuss the Secretary-General's proposals for revitalization, we will of course, once again, revisit the issue of Security Council reform.

So what I propose to do today is to present three points. The first point is about why we have not made any progress so far in Security Council reform. The second point is about the roles and interests of small States in Security Council reform and the third point is about the question of the veto power, which I see everyone has been addressing. I'll try to do this as quickly as I can.

My first point is a question: why has reform of the Security Council not succeeded? Of course, the great paradox here is that, if one listens to all the statements made so far, there seems to be almost total agreement that the Council is probably a relic from 1945 and, as we are now in the twenty-first century, it must be reformed. Yet despite such nearly unanimous agreement, we are not moving ahead with reform. We believe that the key reason that we have not moved ahead with it after 10 years of discussions is that we have put the cart before the horse. We are discussing the shape of the cart and how many seats it should have — that is, how many first-class, second-class and third-class seats here should be in a reformed Security Council — but we have not yet agreed where we want to take the cart once we have put a horse in front of it. Indeed, that is the fundamental problem in this House: among the 191 Member States, there is as yet no consensus on what the Security Council's primary role and responsibilities should be.

By the way, I can say that, when Singapore was on the Security Council, several members compared the Council's work to that of a fire department. A fire department — like the New York Fire Department — reacts automatically, regardless of whether the fire is on Park Avenue or in Harlem, the Bronx or some other area. But the Security Council, whose job is to react to conflicts, does not react in such a dispassionate fashion. It reacts when the interests of the major Powers are affected and remains silent when they are not affected. Why have we allowed that to happen? The reason is that Member States have not reached a common understanding of what the Council's role and responsibilities should be. So my first point is, let us first agree what its role and responsibilities should be before we move on to discussing such matters as its structure and its expansion.

My second point concerns the role of the interests of small States. It is clear that neither the major Powers nor the middle Powers need the Security Council for their security. But the small States — especially those with populations of fewer than 10 million — are the countries that need the Council the most, and they need an effective Council that works. How does one explain to States with populations of fewer than 10 million — which make up approximately half of the membership of the United Nations — that an expansion of the Council will suit their interests and indeed will make the world a safer and more secure place? We hope that those who aspire to permanent membership or reform of the Security Council will address that point to small States and explain how a reformed Council will benefit them.

Let me mention in passing that it is unfortunate that small States are put in the position of having to choose between their bilateral interests and their multilateral interests. In their bilateral interests, they have reasons to maintain good relationships with the major Powers and the middle Powers, so they indicate their support for this or that candidate. But their multilateral interests lie in having an effective Security Council, not necessarily one that is as large as it can possibly be. I think it is unfair to put small States in the position of having to choose between their bilateral interests and their multilateral interests, and we hope that that will now cease.

My third and final point concerns the question of the veto. Here, the tragedy is that all the attention is focused on the formal use of the veto. I hope our colleagues heard what the representative of Spain said yesterday about the hidden vetoes — the ones that are used every day in the course of informal consultations. No light has been shed on all those hidden vetoes, but we need to understand their role within the actual functioning of the Security Council. Frankly, if we are going to talk about expanding the Council and adding new permanent members to it, all of us should first reach an understanding of the responsibilities of permanent membership. The one great mistake we

made in 1945 was to give away the privilege of the veto power without attaching any responsibilities to that privilege. Consequently, we face a very strange situation today. When there is a crisis in the world and one turns to the major Powers and the middle Powers to ask them to help resolve it, they tend to run away; very few of them will volunteer to help to resolve it. On the other hand, when one says that there are permanent seats available on the Security Council — which gives one primary responsibility for handling threats to international peace and security — there are many volunteers. The reason why there are many volunteers for permanent membership is that there are no responsibilities attached to permanent membership. So we should like to suggest that, if the Council truly wants to resolve the question of who should have permanent membership and who should have the veto, it should attach specific, defined responsibilities to permanent membership and the veto power. I think that might set us on the road to Security Council reform.

In conclusion, to avoid any misunderstanding, it is important that I emphasize that we support reform of the Security Council. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, we support its views on reform and expansion of the Council, and we have said before that many countries — including my own — would agree that, when general agreement is reached on expansion of the Council, Japan and Germany should be among the new permanent members. Those are things we have said consistently, and we stand by them. Frankly, however, we believe that if we are to move ahead with Security Council reform, we must first return to basics.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the beginning of the current Assembly session, the world's leaders agreed with near unanimity that the challenges faced by the Organization are unprecedented. One of the greatest difficulties confronting our world today is the confusion in the system of basic values and concepts and others' misuse of that confusion out of either good or ill will. That has led to chaos in the system of international relations. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that some presume that they have a monopoly on facts and can see what others cannot, and then act on that basis.

Our past deliberations on Security Council reform were based on realistic criteria that attempted to respond to the changed circumstances that determine, inter alia, the Council's membership, its working methods and the veto power. Today, it is no longer a question of expanding the Security Council's membership; our deliberations proceed from the need to meet the new challenges facing the system of international peace and security. The Secretary-General was correct when, in paragraph 2 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/58/1), he said:

> "Undoubtedly, in the area of peace and security, it has been a trying year for the United Nations. The war in Iraq severely tested the principle of collective security and the resilience of the Organization. Rarely in its fifty-eight-year history have such dire forecasts been made about the United Nations. The United Nations will emerge strengthened if we make a measured appreciation of what happened ...".

Security Council reform should be based on several premises that are in keeping with the Charter and the historical circumstances, under which the United Nations was founded. The preamble of the Charter states:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice has brought untold sorrow to mankind"

The founders of the United Nations, intent on avoiding the historical circumstances that led to two world wars, emphasized several concepts related to the system of international peace and security, the most important of which is the implementation of the principle of collective security in order to give legitimacy to this principle. The Secretary-General emphasized this in his report on the Millennium Declaration, where he pointed out that cooperation between the countries of the world is more essential now than ever. He also emphasized that the Charter should be the basis for providing legitimacy to all action at the international level.

Democracy in international relations has became more urgent than ever in a world in which communications networks, relations, ties, interests and disadvantages have gone beyond regional and local frameworks. The veto power is one of the most pronounced manifestations of the absence of democracy in international relations. If it is true that any organization in the world needs to strive to achieve stability, then justice should be its guiding source, in keeping with the relationship between justice and law in any legal system.

Based on that same concept, and in keeping with the resolutions of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted at its summits and conferences, the use of veto should be restricted, with the long-term aim of its elimination, as it has been proven that international peace and security have been greatest victims of the veto. It has been abused and has become a tool for discrimination, not only between countries, but also in the implementation of United Nations resolutions, including of the Security Council itself. Therefore, it is important now to establish controls and criteria to avert the arbitrary use of veto.

Reform of the Security Council and increasing its membership should be an integral part of a joint comprehensive endeavour, in which due consideration would be given to the principle of equal sovereignty among nations and equitable geographical representation, as well as to achieving transparency, responsibility and democracy in the working methods of the Security Council, including its decision-making process.

Expansion of the Council membership in both permanent and non-permanent categories must ensure equitable representation for developing countries, in accordance with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement. In that connection, we wish to mention that the Arab Group has always emphasized at previous consultations the need for a permanent seat to be allocated to the Arab countries, as part of any future reform process. Arab countries, supporting expansion of the Council membership, should have one permanent seat, to be filled on a rotating basis and in keeping with the procedures adopted by the League of Arab States. Two non-permanent seats should also be allocated to Arab countries, to be filled on a rotating basis, as is the current practice. The Council membership should be expanded to include 26 members.

Discussing reform of the Security Council and increasing its membership prompts us to attach special importance to the working methods of the Council, which is no less important an issue than is expansion of the Council. This requires the establishment of controls and criteria, emphasized by summits of the Non-Aligned countries, in a way that ensures non-use of the veto in an arbitrary manner and that strengthens democracy and transparency in decision-making and that ensures implementation of Security Council resolutions in a more balanced and equitable way, without resorting to double standards.

Expansion of the Council should be guided by the fact that its ability to mobilize the greatest possible support for its resolutions and measures would be strengthened if they were seen to represent the international community more broadly, in keeping with Article 24 of the Charter, which stipulates that the Security Council act on behalf of the United Nations general membership. Security Council reform should also be carried out pursuant to Article 108 of the Charter.

Enormous efforts have been made during the past 10 years, and the delicate nature of the reform process requires that we achieve consensus. Sincere efforts alone can facilitate the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, which is the only framework for achieving that desired objective.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Having not taken part in the debate earlier this week on the report of the Security Council, I would like to use this opportunity, with your permission, Mr. President, to thank the President of the Security Council for the month of October, Ambassador Negroponte of the United States, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council.

I noticed many speakers in that debate referred, on the one hand, to the report of the Security Council and, on the other hand, to the item now under consideration: the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. In my first draft for this statement I intended to welcome a decision to convene a joint debate, as it would be a manifestation of the streamlining of the General Assembly, to which Iceland attaches importance. I fully agree with the views expressed by the Permanent Representative of Canada at the outset of his statement yesterday that we could have made do with one debate on these issues.

Iceland's views on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council has been on record for years. It is essential that the composition of the Council better reflect the membership of the United Nations as a whole.

Developments since 1945 include the United Nations membership growing from the original 51 States to 191 States, as we have often heard. The decision in 1963 to increase the number of non-permanent seats from six to ten, which took effect in 1965, was in response to demands based on the fact that Member States had greatly increased in numbers. By 1965 they totalled 117. Since that year, 74 new

States have become members of the United Nations. This should be reflected in the composition of the Security Council. We must safeguard the credibility of the Council and at the same time secure its efficiency. We realize that there is no easy balance between equitable representation and the performance of the Council. However, no stone should be left unturned in our efforts to achieve that goal.

The growing practice of open Security Council meetings is to be welcomed. I agree with the Permanent Representative of Guatemala who in last year's debate stated that this practice has contributed to the closer involvement of all States in the Council's work by providing the opportunity to express their views on subjects that the Council considers. Further measures should be taken, however, to increase transparency in the decision-making process and thus add to the welcome steps already taken by the Council, without weakening its capabilities.

Iceland supports an increase in both permanent and non-permanent seats on the Council. New permanent members should have the same rights and obligations as the current permanent members. The veto right should be restricted, and an obligation to state the reason for its use should be established. Such a statement should include the reason why a permanent member considers a matter to be of vital importance, as requested recently by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland Halldór Ásgrímsson in the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/58/PV.14). Or, as my colleague from Singapore so eloquently stated here a few minutes ago, we should attach responsibility to the veto.

I suspect that my statement today will not mark a significant development or change in the debate on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. In truth, I doubt, with all due respect to my colleagues, if any of the statements in this debate will be such a landmark.

The declared aim regarding this issue is, however, clear to every delegation, since in September 2000, at the largest-ever gathering of world leaders, they agreed to intensify efforts for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. That agreement was a landmark.

The positions of United Nations Members are mostly known. We have been working hard and long hours — 10 years as a matter of fact — in the Open-ended Working Group to reach our common goal, but with very limited results as regards the major issues: the expansion of the Council and the question of the veto. We should not, however, underestimate the differences among us, although we know the reform options have been narrowed down and are on the table. We have the common goals of the reform, democratization, and strengthened legitimacy of the Security Council. We believe that the Open-ended Working Group is still the most appropriate forum for negotiation on this important issue, and we urge all Member States to show flexibility and a willingness to compromise in order to realize the aims of our leaders, stated so clearly three years ago.

Let us heed the Millennium Declaration of our leaders and the recent challenge by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to agree on concrete reforms by 2005.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It would not be far from the truth to say that all Member States want to see reform of the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. Article 24 of the Charter establishes the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the general membership. Here, the membership is calling for reform in the composition of the Council.

My delegation stresses the validity of paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), which states that the United Nations finds itself at a critical juncture: unless the Security Council regains the confidence of States and of world public opinion, individual States will increasingly resort exclusively to their own national perceptions of emerging threats and to their own judgement on how best to address them. To forestall such a development, the United Nations will have to demonstrate its ability to deal with the most difficult issues, and to do so effectively.

The principle of equitable representation is enshrined in the Charter. We must therefore be mindful of that principle when hiring or appointing individuals to posts in this Organization.

The fact that there has been a significant increase in the membership of the United Nations to 191 requires the Organization to improve its effectiveness and its readiness to adapt to the expanded membership. That makes it particularly necessary to expand the Security Council and to achieve greater transparency in its working methods.

We endorse the points made by the Secretary-General in his statement at the 7th meeting, on 23 September, with respect to establishing a panel of eminent personalities to address, inter alia, the issue of reforming the Council. We agree that the Council's ability to muster the greatest possible support for its resolutions and decisions will be strengthened if the Council is viewed as representing the whole international community and the geographical and political realities of the contemporary world.

The use of the veto — itself the outgrowth of international circumstances differing from today's — for various purposes and by a limited number of countries does not reflect the Charter concepts of justice and equality among nations. The use of the veto also contradicts the principle of human rights in general. We therefore echo those who have called for the elimination of the veto right, considering it to be a privilege that contradicts the sacred principles enshrined in the Charter. We also call for restricting its use until we have the political will to eliminate it entirely.

Lastly, we underscore the need to achieve balance in the relationship between the General Assembly, the principal body in our Organization, and the Security Council, its executive arm, in an effort to strengthen cooperation between the two. That should be done so that they can truly reflect the will of the international community and so as to put an end to issues that the Council failed in dealing with, and particularly to put an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and to resolve the whole Middle East situation.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): Mongolia has been following closely the discussions on the reform of the United Nations and its institutions. The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, which was established almost a decade ago, has held extensive negotiations on the ways and means to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of that unique body. Today, we are addressing one of the most important, yet difficult and controversial, issues dealing with the reform of the Security Council.

The urgency with which we need to tackle reform issues has been made abundantly clear. The Secretary-General himself has drawn our attention to that fact time and again. He has pointed out that Member States need to take a hard look at the existing architecture of international institutions and the perceived lack of legitimacy of the Security Council's decisions due to the fact that its composition has remained unchanged since 1945. My delegation, like many others, is in full agreement with that appraisal. In fact, during the general debate at this session of the General Assembly, many heads of delegation expressed at the highest level their willingness to speed up the reform process and to make their contributions to that end. My delegation also shares the concern over the slow pace of the reform process of the United Nations. It is evident that innovative approaches and firm political will to change the present situation are the prerequisites for a successful reform.

My delegation believes that there are several fundamental factors pointing to the need for such reforms. Today's world is completely different than it was over 50 years ago, when the system of collective security was defined. During that half-century, we have witnessed such great historic events as the demise of the colonial system, the collapse of the communist dictatorial system, the end of the cold war era and the emergence of a great number of independent States. We are now witnessing the great advance of democratization and globalization. A universal Organization such as the United Nations and a powerful body such as the Security Council, which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, should certainly not lag behind in such historical changes.

Mongolia wants to see the reform of the Security Council take place along the lines of democratization. In that context, we have consistently supported a just and equitable enlargement of the Security Council by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats and by ensuring equal representation for both developing and developed countries. The questions of increasing the effectiveness and democratization of the working methods of the Security Council and reviewing the power of the veto should constitute the essential elements of the reform. My delegation believes that further enhancing openness and transparency and equitably enlarging the composition of the Council would make the Security Council a more democratic and representative body.

At the same time, we are keenly aware of — and indeed share — the concern of other delegations that expanding the membership of the Security Council alone will not necessarily mean increasing its

effectiveness. Another track of Security Council reform could therefore be aimed at the goal of increasing its effectiveness. In that respect, we attach importance to further democratizing its working methods and decision-making practices. In that regard, the issue of the power of the veto has always been raised, including the issue of whether the veto should be retained or restricted and the question of when and under what circumstances it should be used. Clearly, that is one the most important components of the reform of the Security Council, and we cannot just shy away from it.

Looking back at our recent experience, the contentious issues that have prevented the members of the Security Council from reaching common positions and taking collective action were the differing perceptions regarding the level of threat posed to regional or international security, the extent to which peace had been breached and the course of action to be taken in that regard. In my view, therefore, developing and refining a checklist of criteria by which to measure the level and seriousness of a threat is one of the important tasks facing the United Nations. The recommendations of the high-level panel of eminent persons to be established by the Secretary-General will be highly welcome in that respect. The Security Council could determine an adequate and timely response to an emerging threat on the basis of such criteria.

Our determination to carry out the reform of the institutions of the United Nations is motivated by our genuine desire to strengthen multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs and to bolster the capacity of the Organization to respond to new challenges. My delegation hopes that the ideas put forward by different delegations during this session and the findings and recommendations of the high-level panel of eminent persons will enable us to reach a satisfactory solution to these extremely important issues.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): My delegation is very grateful to you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor, but even more so for your strong leadership in the reform process of the United Nations. Austria fully supports your efforts to advance the reform agenda, especially that of the General Assembly. We all agree that 2003 has been a very difficult year for the Organization. The urgent call for reform by the Secretary-General has to be taken up by all Member States.

As host to one of the headquarters of the United Nations, Austria shares a strong sense of responsibility for the effective and efficient functioning of the Organization. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to submit reform proposals in time for consideration by the next session of the General Assembly.

The Millennium Declaration set out a vision for peace, security and sustainable development in our century. We need a fair and consistent collective security system, based on a common understanding of the major threats of today's world and what our common responses should be. It is of critical importance that we put the plight of individual human beings in the centre of our debate.

Austria strongly believes that the strengthening of the main organs of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, will provide a framework for achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The Security Council is at odds with the geopolitical reality of the twenty-first century. It neither reflects the growing number of Members of the United Nations, nor the regional balance. As a result, some question the legitimacy of the Council's decision-making process. Enlarging and balancing its membership, as well as increasing its transparency is essential.

We welcome the recent efforts of the Security Council to increase the transparency of its working methods by conducting more open debates. But more needs to be done. Progress in the Open-ended Working Group cannot be limited to the reform of working methods. The deadlock in the deliberations on membership and veto power needs to be overcome. As a first step, it might help to eliminate extreme positions which do not enjoy wide support. This could reduce the plethora of options before us. Maintaining efficiency, as well as the greatest degree of transparency and legitimacy, must remain equally important goals that should be guiding our reform efforts.

The reform debate of the Security Council has lasted more than ten years without producing tangible results. Progress can only be achieved if the underlying political impasse is overcome by a reconsideration of positions in the major capitals of the world. All sides must be prepared to compromise.

Programme of work

The President: In the morning of Thursday, 16 October 2003, the General Assembly will take up, as the first item, agenda item 124, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", to consider a report of the Fifth Committee to be issued as document A/58/432. The General Assembly will then continue its consideration of agenda item 39, entitled "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support", as well as sub-items (a) and (b). Once the debate on agenda item 39 is concluded, the General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 56, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Once the debate on agenda item 56 is concluded, the General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 11, entitled "Report of the Security Council", in order to hear my assessment of the debate on that item and to take note of the report of the Security Council, on the understanding that that item will remain open for consideration during the fifty-eighth session.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.